

Charging the Hero

*Maou Dakedo Yuushano Koto Kokuso Suru Kotoni
Shitakara*

Arc 1: Meeting

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✖ Journal

December 5th. I've been writing this journal for over ten years, but I think I'll put a stop to it today.

The other day, a letter of unknown sender was delivered to me. Its contents indicated that the demon lord destroyed by the hero over fifty years ago was still alive, and still aiming to overthrow the world.

To be completely honest, I can't gauge the authenticity of that letter. Having long since lost interest in this world, wishing day after day for nothing but its tranquility, whether this letter is nothing but a prank, or some notice from an insightful one on the swirling plots of the source of all evil, I haven't the slightest idea.

Thinking back on it all now, I regret that I should've looked upon events more objectively.

I lack what a majority of society regards as common sense. Having failed to ever live a life that could be called normal, I haven't reared that sort of knowledge or judgement.

So I had decided to believe.

That every single passage of this letter from whereabouts unknown was genuine, that a source of evil existed to threaten the peace of the world once more, and that I...

Had enough power to cut it down.

Apparently, in my veins flows the blood of the hero who exterminated the demon from the world once before.

Why had I chosen to move? Perhaps it is the case the late-hero's blood had roused my body, and perhaps I had moved for a reason completely irrelevant to all of that.

I know nothing about the world, but what I really don't know is my own feelings at this moment.

Why had I done it, even now I can't say.

That I'm writing this last entry is because I believe putting it on paper will be useful in getting my thoughts in order.

By no means is it for me to raise memory later, or to obsess on moments passed.

... But I digress.

I've only lived a mere eighteen years, but it's the first time I've ever written a journal entry as long as today's.

I've never experienced a moment that moved my heart as much as these past few weeks.

Ah, I see. I finally get it. I was delighted.

In all my life, I had always been educated to kill evil. Solely to defeat the incarnation of evil that may or may not be reborn in the future, I trained my body, swung my sword, and waited for nothing but that moment to come.

I had waited a long, long time. I had stopped mingling with humans, living a lonely life with nature, swinging my sword through the changing seasons as I continued to wait.

It truly was an eternity. Perhaps something called the demon lord no longer existed in this world, and I had become an existence unnecessary to the world. The thought had plagued my mind.

It was the most fearful of thoughts. That no one would ever need me, when I thought I was only to age away and die, I couldn't stop my shaking bones. I couldn't sleep at night.

So the moment I received that letter, it was my life's greatest joy.

This life was finally over. I could go to a new world.

I believed in that alone, and did it.

Right. It's true, on that night twenty five days ago, I murdered the demon lord.

It seems my lawyer is coming tomorrow. I don't know what sort of person will

be coming, but I intend to divulge everything I saw, everything I heard, and everything I did exactly as I know it.

Visitations (1)

The country of Grimbeld wasn't particularly feudalistic, nor was it under noble rule; it was a constitutional land well compromised of modern science and magic.

It seems there was once a grand evil plotting to seize hold of the world.

The reason for the 'seems' was that this was already a happening of the past, and a tale of over fifty years ago.

To the long-lived races, perhaps such passage of time was still kept fresh in memory, but to we simple humans, it was an exceedingly long time, and already a chapter of history.

No matter how hard we tried to embrace it, it didn't hold a sense of reality.

At this point, if you wanted to know of the war, rather than the memories of man, you'd definitely learn much more by going to your local library.

And right now, I was in such a library. Just as I was saying, to study about that war of times passed.

Even so, why was I doing such a thing? Or so the question passed through my mind.

The start of it all came down this morning...

I had been in the Lockhart Law Offices as usual; it had all begun with the opening of the door.

Visitations (2)

I got into law school when I was eighteen. And during my enrollment, I passed the bar, graduating at the age of twenty two. Simultaneously, I became a legal apprentice, attaining my long-awaited attorney's badge after approximately a year.

The reason, or rather motive I aimed for lawyer in this world. It was... because this job paid absurdly well.

Having lost my parents at a young age, I had spent my life up to fifteen in an orphanage.

Once I graduated school, I marched right out of the institution and rented out an apartment. But even if I say that, it's not as if I hated the orphanage or anything. The director was a relatively good person, and I've no trauma of receiving any melodramatic ill-treatment of violence you might find in your dramas.

It's likely that compared to the standard orphans of the world, I lived a good life.

I had spent a poor, but considerably fun childhood.

Of course, there were times I felt the discomfort of being in an orphanage, but it's not like I had ever especially hated or attained an inferiority complex over that.

But even so, from when I was young, I had always admired the affluent sort of person.

Exchanging a promise that I'd definitely not be a bother, I had the institution's director sign on as guarantor, and began my life alone at fifteen.

My goal at the time was to earn money.

At first, I started with physical labor anyone could do. I always had confidence in my stamina. So anyways, I'd work during the day, and once I returned, I'd study law, past precedent, and examination countermeasures.

Taking three years, I finally stored up the money I needed, and by paying the

law school's matriculation fee, I had succeeded in taking the first step on my road to riches.

The school itself lessened my time for part-time work, and at any rate, I was devoted to my studies. I greedily took in whatever knowledge I'd need to become a lawyer.

But precedent wasn't just about learning, I'd actually go to the courthouses, and attend the trials.

In this world where there were still countries that would easily put the death sentence on criminals without proper deliberation, I'm sure a country like Grimbeld that gave the right to attorney to any defendant no matter how atrocious was a rare existence.

But because of that, the demand for lawyers was high, and it was why regardless of birth, you could become a lawyer by individual effort. I'm glad to have been born in this country.

After finishing the apprentice course and becoming a lawyer, I worked my first year in a law office that specialized in criminal court.

To the end, I was just temporarily working there to build up results, but to be frank, the salary was low.

And that was because the law office's head I was working under was skilled, but somewhat off in the concept of administration.

Thinking back, perhaps she was the bearer of a personality I'd have to call kind. The legal fee she charged clients was always the bare minimum. Going even further, if there was a troubled client out there who clearly didn't have the money, she'd try to save them. That's the sort of person she was.

To speak honestly, my mental health during that year wasn't too great.

I advised again and again for that boss to take on better-paying clientele. Every time I did, she would make a troubled expression.

"But it's a job no one else can do."

Or so she'd offer some incomprehensible reply.

I thought she was foolish. There were other lawyers out there. In the first

place, defendants in criminal court could automatically hire state-sanctioned lawyers.

The country would cover the cost. Though they were paid chicken feed.

But no, perhaps that's precisely why it was. Those sorts of jobs that wouldn't bring any money should just be thrown to those unskilled connection-less destitute lawyers.

When she had the ability to do something much bigger, that boss that wouldn't even try to do it... there's a possibility some part of me was looking down on her.

So once I obtained all the knowledge I needed to perform as a lawyer, I went independent at once.

I had the money to open my practice.

I was too busy granting my dreams that I didn't have the time to play around regardless. In the first place, study itself had become something of a hobby, so everything beside reference texts and the apartment's rent were sent around to my savings.

I steadily saved my low salary. It was a poor office, but I did get paid every month, and if I did overtime, I'd be properly paid extra, so the speed I stored money was fast.

... Of course, whatever extra overtime I worked was taken out of the boss's own savings.

Anyways, that sort of thing happened, and I finally opened the Lockhart Law Offices, and here I am.

Around a year after I went independent. The Lockhart Law Offices were...
Facing financial crisis.

Visitations (3)

It's true I was having some difficulties.

It was my first experience managing a business, and I had anticipated it wouldn't go well from the start, and that I would likely have a rough patch of failure.

But even so, I ran it. Since I didn't have a record yet, I assertively took on small jobs, and troublesome requests.

I couldn't quite get it to take an upward turn, and red numbers were swelling bigger than the black ones.

And the morning of that day. The door to that office once full of hope opened up to a tidy room where, let alone hope, there wasn't even a scrap of paper or speck of dust.

I immediately used my cell to contact the clerk.

Brrrrriiiiiinnnggg... it didn't connect on the first try.

After obstinately calling a number of times, I heard a sleepy voice.

'Yeah~, hello. Who am I talking to?'

"Hello hello, it's me."

'Ah, yep, got it. It's a Mr. Me. Could you be one of those swindlers all the rage these days?'

"No, way off. And wait, am I not your boss?"

'I know that. I have caller ID. More importantly, what do you need? So early in the morning?'

"No, rather than needs, come to think of it, why aren't you at work today?"

'Wait, didn't I tell you? I quit yesterday.'

"Eh? What's this? First I'm hearing of it."

'You must be mistaken. Try taking off your shoes for a bit.'

"Why?"

'Because I wrote 'I quit' in your shoes with permanent marker.'

"Oh, is that so. I never noticed. Really sorry for that."

‘As long as you understand. Well, I’m sleepy, so I’m hanging up.’

Click. The call cut off.

I took off my shoes. Sure enough, it was written.

‘Dear Boss. I quit♥.

P.S; Your shoes smell, please go die.’

I called again. Once, twice, on the third ring, I heard a sleepy voice again.

‘What is it?’

“What is it? That’s my line! What the hell is this!?”

‘Please don’t be so noisy in the morning. As it is, I had to write my letter of resignation into those smelly shoes of yours.’

“Well I’m sorry they smell!! I’ll be careful from here on! And wait, you’re that, aren’t you. I only hired you the month before last. Why are you quitting already?”

‘Eh~ I mean boss. You haven’t paid my last month’s salary yet, have you? I’m not a volunteer, so I’d be troubled if you don’t pay what you owe me.’

“Well, okay, I can’t deny that.”

‘In the first place, this is that. A breach of the labor standards act. Are you listening? Is that something a lawyer should do? If you don’t pay up quickly, I really will take action.’

“Um, well, truly sorry.”

‘I’m counting on you.’

“Yeah. I’ll pay up at once. Anyways, there’s something else I wanted to ask, but what happened to the fixtures that were here? The place was completely empty when I came in this morning.”

“If that’s what you’re taking about, I pawned them off. If you don’t get them back soon, they’ll flow away, so you’d best be careful.”

“For reals? Say that first.”

‘My apologies. Well then, is that everything?’

“Yeah, really sorry for waking you up.”

... Snap. The line was violently cut.

“I see, so they were pawned...”

I stood at the window, and roared.

“Don’t just go and sell off my stuuuuuuuuuuuufffffff!!”

... I never should’ve hired that truant.

Visitations (4)

If you have no money, you can only earn it. Even if you have to do a job you'd rather not.

Once you leave the flourishing business district, you'll find a large crossing. If you take a rest, and walk forward a hundred meters, you'll enter a path lined by declining office buildings.

While they were all much the same sort of place, there was only one eight story building boasting an especially flashy design. It seems its name was the Super Golden East Building, and I had always thought the building's owner's naming sense was a little off.

If you climb to that building's top floor, you'll find a door with the name, 'Happyhappy Law Offices' printed on its plate with lettering so clear it was shady in and of itself.

In the end, I had returned. When I had decided I'd never see them again.

I knocked the door three times, to hear an overly clear, 'come in' chime from the beyond.

Visitations (5)

Opening the door found me in a office with a calm atmosphere, the opposite of the building's exterior.

I seemed as if all the walls and corners of the office were made of bookshelves, likely containing records of cases gone by alongside legal documents, and the owner of this office's personal hobby, the reference books of insects.

Affording a glance further inside, the light diagonally streaming in from the window illuminated a large L-shaped desk.

On the desk were books and forms piled like a mountain, alongside the triangle-folded nameplate marking that area as the boss's domain.

On the other side of the desk, a woman of unkempt blond hair reaching to her hips and black-rimmed glasses let a wrinkle come to her brow as she scratched her head messily and looked over the documents.

In an instant, a scent to make me wince reached my nose.

... Uwah, she hasn't bathed again. Judging by the smell, I guess a week?

Entering the office, I closed the door behind me. On the creak it made as it swung shut, the master of the room finally turned an eye to my presence.

At first, she dubiously narrowed her blue eyes and glared at me, but that was simply because this person had terribly bad eyesight.

She didn't have any ill intent, but because of that look in her eyes, she was often misunderstood.

Eventually, her eyes opened wide.

"Oh, if it isn't Dan. What's the matter today? It's really been a while."

Or so she raised her voice as she stood from her seat, spreading out her hands grandiosely as she approached, and eventually embracing me with all her strength.

The moment she held me, her full chest hit against mine, but at the same

time her face let off a rancid scent the likes of which I'd never smelt before in my entire existence... to summarize, it was heaven and hell. Take your pick.

“Erk, you smell... boss, please keep away.”

“Ah, sorry, sorry. These days I've been doing nothing but work, and I haven't found time to change.”

... It wasn't on that measly level.

I pinched my nose, as I turned back to look up at the proprietress of this office.

That dazzling blond, and those transparent blue eyes, her pale skin without a single wrinkle, and that chest you could make out across her suit.

As if she had absolutely no interest in trends of fashion, this wasted potential was the one who was once my boss, and the culprit behind the screwy naming of Happyhappy Law Offices. The female lawyer unknown to defeat in the courtroom, the 'Queen of Innocence'. Also known as Natasha Holstein.

Visitations (6)

“It really has been a while.”

Boss Natasha sat in the receptions sofa, beckoning me to sit in the sofa opposite.

As I sat on the leather-coated sofa, I heard a rustling sound from my feet, and as doubt rose in my mind, I heard a, ‘Oh, are you curious?’ as Natasha reached across the table with a face full of curiosity.

Boss Natasha’s face alone was terribly in order. If you cut out some photos and lined them up, her beauty was enough for anyone to fall at first sight.

But unlike the photos, a raw odor wafted around the real Natasha, so most men would let out a groan before they could set eyes on her. I bent backwards, doing my best not to groan.

“Oh, Dan. Why are you pinching your nose?”

“... Because I just farted.”

“Oh, how vulgar.

Even like this, I had manners. It wasn’t by much, but I couldn’t bring myself to tell my old superior that she smelled.

But seeing her join me in pinching her nose with a troubled look on her face, I got the urge to punch something.

“So what is in that insect cage?”

I pointed at the contained under the sofa. Even now, something was rummaging through it.

“Ah, that’s, you see. It’s something my father sent me just the other day. Had I ever told you what sort of work my father was doing?”

“Yes, if I recall, he had a job in trade or such.”

This person held many things beside a good face and education. Even if her law office went into the red, her family had enough assets for me to put the word ‘extremely’ before ‘wealthy’.

She herself held a number of estates, and her businessman brother was the

proprietor of the most successful enterprise in this country.

She had a majority of everything that would make people jealous. Looking at Boss Natasha's social standing alone, I'm sure many would be envious.

Truly... no really, why does she smell so bad? As a daughter of a good family, didn't she ever learn to wash her body once a day?

"It's you see, a roach father found in the jungles of the country he's working in."

"Throw it away at once."

"N-no. Perhaps it's a rare species that's yet to have been documented."

"It's fine. If it's those guys, they can make it as strays in this town."

"Urrgh, as always, you say some heartless things... if you didn't have that part of you, you'd be quite the cute boy, Dan."

... Shut it. Daggit, do we have any insecticide?

I looked around the room, but to the bug fancier slash attorney Natasha, that such a weapon didn't exist in her office was a fact I learned painfully well back when I was working here.

Returning to the matter at hand. Anyways, it didn't seem talks were proceeding at all, so I carried the cockroach-ridden bug cage to another room. Because I recalled how she had suddenly burst into tears when I melted down her treasured slug with salt.

Nothing good will come of throwing it out. And...

... When this person cries, she's really loud.

While I was at it, I drove the boss to the shower room, and ordered her to wash her body. I'm sure if she washed a bit, that raw stench would go away.

I opened the window and flipped the exhaust fan's switch. A roaring sound began to come from the ceiling.

From the shower room, I could hear Boss Natasha's shrill singing voice alongside the sound of running water.

"... I guess I should clean."

I knew where the broom and dust cloth were kept. Back when I worked here as well, these misc tasks weren't part of my job description, but the office was

helplessly dirty, so I had done some thorough cleans of my own.

The book shelves and window frames, I polished the room down to its corners, and after wringing out the dust cloth again, I approached her desk to find the documents she had been reading lain out.

When I took them in hand, a single photo fell out of the papers.

With some childish innocence still remaining, it reflected a single young girl.

Visitations (7)

I took the photo in hand and inspected it.

At first glance, I thought her a beauty, but observing closer, I found her eyes were sunk in, her skin was rugged, her black hair unevenly cut, and seeing all parts of her gruff appearance, rather than a young girl, it held the impact as if I was looking straight at a wild beast.

... Who is this?

A name was written on the documents that came with the picture.

Defendant: Claudia Rheinland, Age 18(?), Occupation Unknown, Residence Unknown,

Charge: Murder

“Murder? Did she kill someone?”

I inspected the photo again. The girl’s sharp eyes as if attempting to make an enemy of the entire world, were staring at me.

... I really wouldn’t like to get this girl to hate me.

Even so, I thought.

Her cold looks and unknown address. No matter how you looked at her, she was a vagrant.

The nation of Grimbeld was surrounded by treacherous mountains, an existence like a solitary island in the middle of land. Because of that solid wall of nature, there hadn’t been a war that could be called a war in the past hundred years.

Of course, if you trace history further back, this country surrounded by other great powers was easy to make the spark for war. It seems vicious fights of blood for blood had unfolded here.

The reason Grimbeld didn’t intervene in war was to avoid that situation from repeating. While it was called a land of peace, it’s true identity lay out the condition of not supporting any other country to take distance from war; a den

of cowardice.

But because of that, there was no war, and we'd developed all the way to be players in the global economy.

Even in that ten-year war, when not only the major powers, the other surrounding nations formed an alliance to participate, Grimbeld alone didn't lift a hand, for by not allying with anyone, this country was one that had earned the peace of neutrality.

In exchange, this country had become an exceedingly convenient environment for criminals and anti-socials.

By not allying with anyone, even if something happened, we wouldn't cooperate with anyone. Even if a criminal came in from abroad, not only would this country refuse to help out with the search, they wouldn't even concede any relevant information.

The criminals that fled to this country that hated the slightest contact with others, as long as they didn't commit a crime in these land, they would likely never be arrested or punished.

Otherwise assertive in economic transactions and cultural exchanges, Grimbeld was constantly aiming to hold neutrality in law and politics, in regards to foreign involvement, refusing no matter the case.

To wish for a peaceful country, they had chosen the path of solitude. That was the sort of land we were in.

So at times, these troublesome folks came out.

These vagrants of unknown residence and occupation. No matter how great their sins of the past, even if they were the demon lord, this country would be the one to write off their sins and let them live a new life.

I won't say everyone immigrating to this country was like that, but when you take into account how approximately fifty percent of this country's criminals are immigrants, you have to nod your head.

Coming all the way to another country only to rack up crimes again. The environment didn't matter. In the end of it all, what one find's happiness

changes their personality, and as long as they don't put in the effort, nothing will come of it.

At the very least, that's how I see it. That's how I'd lived up to now, and why no matter the terrible situation ahead of me, I wouldn't continue moving forward.

However...

"Whoo! My first shower in a while felt nice!"

The one who opened the door, her voice intermingles with a fiery hum was Boss Natasha. Her blond hair was lightly moist, with steam spreading up from her head.

"Boss, what sort of attire is that?"

"Eh? Is it strange?"

I inspected her clothing.

The towel around her shoulders hung loosely, hiding her pale chest. But nothing else.

The droplets of water made their way down to the base of her back, eventually meeting shorts of pink cloth and red ribbons.

Perhaps because the shorts were too small, or because her proportions were needlessly extravagant, it clenched tight on her form.

"This is a workplace, you know."

"A valid point, but I'm the only one here."

"I'm here. Look, quickly go and change."

I lobbed the change of clothes I had prepared beforehand at her. From the start, she always left the shower like that, so I always had a change prepared.

It had startled me at first, but I was already used to it.

"What a pain. Dan, I'm changing, so could you..."

"Just get dressed already."

I kicked her into the dressing room and closed the door. From within, I could

hear a groan of, 'I might awaken to something' but ignored it.

Looking on her from the side, she looked like an exceptional idiotic person. That's surely how she looked, but this genuine eccentric female attorney; for some reason I could never abandon her.

I looked at the photo on the desk again.

I'd seen time and again how she saved people like these at their times of crises.

Visitations (8)

“So anyways...”

Wiping her post-shower moist blond hair with a towel, Boss Natasha sat in her chair. Because of the light streaming in behind her, I couldn't make out her expression.

I had returned all the documents to her desk, taking a seat on the receptions sofa.

“What business do you have with me today?”

The rancid stench was gone. More than that, I could smell something sweet.

“To cut to the chase, please give me work.”

“Work? But we specialize in criminal cases over here. Didn't you hate those sorts of jobs?”

She said as she touched her lightly pigmented lips with a finger. As always, her forehead wrinkled, and her eyes narrowed, and at a glance, one might think she may be displeased, but I knew.

In most cases where she made that face, she was pleased.

... When she was truly in a bad mood, this woman would go expressionless. More so, that one was scarier.

“I'm fine with anything. I'm just a little troubled with money right now, so if possible, I'd like an easy job where anyone could make a quick buck.”

“Why are your thoughts so NEET-centric? Yeah, a job where you can make a quick buck...”

Boss Natasha's eye level dropped.

... What was she looking at?

At the end of her glance were the papers I had just returned to her desk.

“Truth be told, I'm juggling two cases right now.”

Natasha spoke.

“The first looks like it’ll take a while, but it will definitely pay out. The other one will end quickly, but it won’t make you any money. I’d like to prioritize the latter.”

Meaning a job that paid, and one that did not.
In my head, I wondered which category the vagrant on the desk fell into.

Now then, what should I do.
To be honest, I don’t really like criminal cases. The payment is never that great, and it’s easy for the matters to drag out. What’s more, this country’s police force were a skilled lot.

Most indictments ended with a certain guilty verdict. There was barely any chance of winning over a not guilty.

To say more, there was also a problem on the client side. Clients with money generally had skilled legal advisors of their own.

So the cases a fresh, connectionless, poor attorney with nothing but the necessities of life gathered together could take were all incidents raised by the penniless paupers.

In the past when I worked under her, I had defended nothing but those moneyless criminals.

I learned at that time. There’s no need to save the weak.

Each and everyone one of them had any number of chances to reform themselves. No, to go even further, they didn’t even have to resort to crime.

Regardless of however many better options were around them, they had sinned only to satisfy their own cravings.

No righteousness. No worth in saving. Even less worth in me saving them. If they wanted to do something so badly, they should do it themselves.

I’m sure that photo girl from who knows where wasn’t much different from the others.

So if possible, I don’t want to take that case.

That appearance, and history. The accused in the photo didn’t look as if she had enough funds to hire a lawyer.

And... I looked at Natasha sitting in the large boss chair.

That woman was a soft soul who found her life's meaning in helping those sorts.

I'm sure the case she's currently held up with is the murder incident that uncertain address girl had brought about.

I'm sure that's the incident that will end soon, but won't make for any money.

If that's the case, while it'll take some time, I'll just have to take the paying job.

I made up my mind.

"Understood. You have your own work, so I'll help out with that long-term job."

"Really? That's a bit help. Truth be told, my hands are full helping out my brother."

... Hm? Brother?

I reached into my memory. If I recall correctly, this person's brother managed the most successful company in the nation.

"Um, could I ask something..."

"Go right ahead."

"What sort of job are you doing?"

"Hmm... what should I do. It's client information for argument's sake, so it's basic principle not to divulge it, but I doubt it matters. The truth is, and it's quite an embarrassing tale, you see my brother, he was sued."

"What?"

"Look, you know about him, right? My brother's always been a strange one."

"What..."

"And so, one of his strange hobbies is wearing womens' underwear. He says it helps him calm down."

"What!?"

"Dan, you haven't been saying anything but 'what' for a while now. Don't you have anything else to say?"

"I'm giving the appropriate reaction. In what world do you find a first-rate enterprise's president with those sorts of perversions?"

“That is a misunderstanding.”

“I hope so.”

“Almost all first-rate enterprise presidents are perverts.”

“So that was the misunderstanding!?”

My head was starting to hurt. It’s over for this country.

“Ah, you don’t believe me. I’m telling the truth!”

Puffing up her cheeks, Boss Natasha went on.

“Anyways, that brother is currently being sued for sexual harassment.

“What did he do specifically?”

“Stole a maid’s panties.”

“Idiotic.”

“Don’t say it to me. I’m defending that brother.”

“And he stole them? Why did he steal? If he asked, I’m sure she’d have handed them over. No matter how perverted, he’s still rich. Didn’t he think of paying money for them?”

Well, that would be a problem in itself though.

“In my brothers words, stealing them excites him”

“He’s a genuine pervert.”

“There’s no falsifying the symptoms of perverts. All perverts are genuine.”

Natasha let out a sigh.

“Anyways, I’m busy. I have to go off and hear the situation from Satti.”

“Who’s this Satti?”

“Our maid. She’s been working in our house for over five years. An extremely cute girl, I tell you.”

“And what happened to that Satti?”

“That Satti’s panties were stolen.”

Natasha grieved. “Satti, why did you have to sue him this time around? You’d always laughed it off and forgiven him... you think we can reach a settlement?”

“So he’s not a first-time offender.”

“Of course not. My brother’s always been a pervert. When I was a kid, I had mine stolen a lot. Thinking back, they’re nice memories, you know.”

... Maybe I should be happy I didn't take up that case.

I spoke to the boss. "Understood. I've heard enough. Then could you tell me about the case I'm in charge of?"

Visitations (9)

“The incident occurred at...”

Natasha spread the documents over the table as she spoke.

“A tourist hotel in the snowy mountains. Do you know Westminster Hotel?”

“If I recall, it’s famous as a resort. I always wanted to stay there once, but...”

“I stayed there when I was around five. That hotel you see, it was built as if stuck fast to the back of a cliff. So both the first and roof have their own exits.”

“The roof too? Where is that connected to?”

“There’s a viewing platform. The view was really nice, and I think they had some binoculars you could use at a charge. Also, you can cross from the roof to the top of the cliff. There’s a forest just past it, so you’ve got to try picnicking there.”

A resort hotel. A forest on a cliff, and a viewing platform. It didn’t seem I could manage it with mental memos, so I wrote it down.

“The incident came to light November 12th. Early morning. One of the hotel’s security found the body while doing his rounds through the first floor’s park.”

“Park? Just how big is the place?”

“Yeah, I don’t have any detailed documents right now. By my memory, it’s quite wide. That place’s park had a large pond and orchard and some scraggly hedges... and there were some strange bronze statues around; a little ominous, I guess?”

Bronze statues? And why?

“The body was found right next to one of the statues stationed around the hotel, it seems.”

Natasha turned through the papers. There was an overhead map of the scene.

On the left side of the rough sketch, a vertical line was drawn, and beside it was the word hotel. So from that line to the left was probably the hotel. That would make the right side the park.

Perfectly in the center of the park, a circle was drawn.

“What’s this circle?”

“That’s the statue.”

“What sort of statue is it?”

“Wait just a minute. I’m sure I got a picture of it with the documents.”

Natasha looked through the scattered photos atop the desk one by one, before crying out, ‘Eureka! This is it!’

I accepted the photo from her. On it, surely photographed from below, was the form of a warrior riding a white horse.

The horse and warrior were of stone, but the verdant sword thrust out towards the sky was reflecting the sun’s light. No matter how you looked at it, that was a real sword.

And that sword was smothered with a red liquid.

“Is this blood?”

“That’s right. It’s a match with the victim’s blood type. And it’s undoubtedly real blood.”

Bronze statue. Sword. And blood.

The sword in the statue’s hand had to be at least two meters above the ground. The statue was fixed to the ground, and it definitely didn’t look like a weight a single human could deal with.

“Um, I’d like to think not, but that wouldn’t happen to be the murder weapon, would it?”

“Of course not. The murder weapon’s over here.”

Natasha took out another picture.

“This is the murder weapon. It’s the holy sword Blutgang.”

I inspected the photo as I spoke. That tidy sheath held a simple sword that had a sense of age to it. Honestly, it looked blunt.

“What is this?”

“I’m telling you, it’s the holy sword. It’s received the blessing of the spirits, a true sacred artifact.”

I had a headache. What's with this case?

Visitations (10)

“What do you mean by holy sword?”

I asked Natasha.

“The holy sword’s you see, a sword blessed by god or spirits, or saints, or some other divine existence. Unlike other swords, it could have special abilities, or be able to cut special things.”

“Special abilities... for example?”

“Let’s see. A famous legend tells of a sword that makes whoever draws it from its sheath king.”

“Then what do they do if no one can draw it?”

“Who knows? Can’t they just make some old guy wandering around the area king?”

Well that’s just peachy.

“There’s also the ability to heal wounds, and the ability to cut things up regardless of how sturdy or solid they are, ones that don’t need any maintenance, there are various abilities.”

“Then does this holy sword called Blutgang have some sort of ability too?”

“It does. First of all, only people who’ve received the blessing of the spirits can draw it.”

“Hmm, if that’s the case... the divine sod who can pull this sword from its sheath is the culprit?”

“Right. That’s one of basis the police used to arrest the defendant.”

This is somewhat mismatched.

I tried asking further.

“By the way, has it already been confirmed only humans who’ve received the blessing can draw it?”

“The experiments are already gone and done with. The police force’s magic theory lab gathered people of all races, genders and nationalities, and as a result of experimentation on who could pull it from its sheath not a single one

could. Besides one.”

“That one would be her?”

I pointed my index finger at the picture. A woman was projected on it.

“Right, the defendant Claudia Rheinland. Before the eyes of the magic theory lab’s researchers, the detectives, and the police, she brilliantly pulled the sword out, it seems. When even the most robust of men couldn’t draw it, she pulled it out oh so easily.”

So the only one who could draw the sword was the defendant. But one point made me curious.

“What about after it’s drawn from its sheath? If she pulled the sword out, and someone else used it to dye her hands in crime?”

“That probability is low. There are two reasons. There’s the possibility that a special curse has been placed on this sword.”

Curse. An incorporeal means to afford harm onto others.

“So there’s a curse on the sword?”

“The holy sword’s a sword after all. But this is still just a possibility, and we don’t really know if there’s one on it yet. Under investigation at magic theory lab.”

“The grounds for suspecting a curse?”

“That? Well the basis is in how the defendant didn’t let go of the sword.”

Didn’t let go? What’s that supposed to mean.

“Is that particularly strange? Even more so if it’s a murder weapon. I doubt she’d want to give it to another...”

“That’s not how it is, apparently. When the police tried to retrieve the sword from the defendant, she put up some intense resistance.”

“By resistance, you mean she put up a struggle?”

“Well, I’m sure she did. Because three policemen were injured on her arrest.”

The clouds look menacing. Not only a murderer, she ran amok when they tried to arrest her. I don’t really want to be her defense. But...

“I get the feeling using that as a basis is too weak. On a psychological level, it isn’t so strange for the culprit to resist arrest.”

“That isn’t the only time she acted violent, Daniel.”

Natasha suddenly poked my nose with her index finger.

“Please don’t.”

As I brushed away her finger with one hand, she said some incomprehensible things like, ‘fufu, slow down, slow down.’

“I said it before, but in the magic theory lab’s investigations, they handed the sword to the accused on one occasion. And she drew it easily; remember?”

“Yes, you did tell me that.”

I recalled. And there, the question came up.

“Come to think of it, they did quite a dangerous experiment there. They handed a sword to a suspected murderer?”

“There were policemen accompanying the investigation. Around ten of the riot squad. They were all well-trained elites. They had enough preparations to contain her if she ran wild. But nothing happened. When she was drawing the sword, that is.”

A phrasing full of implication.

“Meaning?”

“When the sword was in its sheath, and they tried to take it back, she grew violent again. There was a video recorded if you want to see the particulars, and I’ve seen it. It looked as if a girl who’d been nice and quiet up to that point suddenly underwent a complete change.”

Complete change, eh? I asked Natasha.

“So something must have been the trigger?”

“Right. When I watched the video, it looked to me as if she was extremely afraid of having the sword taken away from her.”

“Afraid? Of what?”

“I don’t know that. But I do have an acquaintance who’s working at magic theory, and when I told him about it, he says there’s a possibility it’s cursed.”

Magic theory was the abbreviation of magic theory research lab. By the way, there was another research institute they had; one that used forensic science.

“Among the curses, there are those with effects and those without. Perhaps the later has been cast on the holy sword.”

“Meaning... what does that mean?”

“Yeah~ let’s see. Then hypothetically, let’s say young Dan wants to peep on my shower scene.”

“Though I don’t.”

“Why’s that? I’ll just throw this out there, but I’m amazing in the nude (´•ω•`).”

For some reason, Boss Natasha was making a refreshing expression.

“Anyways...”

Paying no need to my words, Natasha went on.

“I cast a curse on young Dan. If you peek, I’ll kill you.”

“Hah, is that so.”

“Why is your response so unmotivated?”

“I mean, I won’t peep. So I won’t die. Simple, or rather, does this really matter?”

After her pouting lips tapered like a young chick’s, Natasha continued.

“Hmmp! You’re a wolf in sheep’s clothing, I tell you! Anyways, as a man, little Danny boy loses out to his sexual desire and my charm as an adult woman, peeking in on my shower scene.”

And I’m telling you I ain’t peeping. Or so I wanted to say, but that would just derail the conversation again, so I restrained myself.

“But through a cruel twist of fate, young Dan is spotted by me as I just finish washing myself. This is bad, what does he do!? The way things are going, he’ll have broken the curse and be fated for death! A shocking and thrilling development!”

What part of it?

“But kind of heart, and with the dignity of an adult woman, I say to him. Oh, you’re such a pervert, that’s no good! Bop!”

Natasha swung her fist at my forehead, but I avoided it.

“Why did you dodge!?”

“I mean, you were trying to hit me. Anyone would avoid that one.”

“Mmm, when you’re the one who peeped on me.”

“I didn’t. Snap back to reality.”

“I said this was hypothetical Hmph. Anyways, that that was my lecture on curses.”

Again, what part of it?

I tried putting that flow in order.

The boss made it taboo for me to peep. I broke the taboo. But even though I broke it, I wasn’t killed. But the fear still persists.

“The sort of thing where it doesn’t display an effect even if you break a set rule? Is that what you’re trying to say?”

“Exactly! With curses you see, you can cast them even if you don’t have a special sort of mana. So it doesn’t matter whether the sword be holy or demonic. Well, in the world, there are curses that really do display a high output if you break a taboo, but this case is different. Could it be the contents of the curse placed on holy sword Blutgang are that she can’t hand the sword to another? That’s why she was so fearful of it being taken away.”

It’s true there was some sense to it.

The reason she turned violent on her arrest was because they tried to take her sword away.

The accused who stayed calm even when drawing the sword suddenly showed resistance when it was taken away, the same reason.

“Who’s the one who cast the curse?”

“Who knows? I don’t have that much information. For curses, if there are ones someone intentionally places, there are some that arbitrarily place themselves.”

“Is that how it is?”

“That’s how it is. I mean Dan, even after you quit the office, you still call me boss, don’t you?”

“And what of it?”

“I’m not forcing you. You quit, so I don’t mind if you lightly call me Tasha. But you won’t. Why is that?”

“Why...”

Come to think of it, why do I call her that?

Even if I stopped calling her boss, and even used a pet name, I'm sure this boss wouldn't be angry. When there wasn't any sort of penalty to it, I didn't try to do it at an emotional level.

"Without feeling the slightest question, most of these actions we carry out as if there were normal are because of a curse. The curse to constantly want to be polite has been cast on you. Even if you meet someone you can't respect, if they be a senior at your workplace, or your superior, or older in years, or higher in status than you, that you keep on speaking politely is a curse, isn't it?"

"Then if that curse went away, I'd be calling you Tasha in an affectionate voice?"

"Want to try?"

Boss Natasha touched her index finger to her lips, making a gentle smile.

Visitations (11)

“I won’t.”

I gave her a clean denial.

“I’ve taken quite a liking to this curse. In the first place, it may be nice to call you whatever I want in private, but that would be a hindrance to work, would it not?”

“Would it really? Me and my brother call others however we see fit, and we’ve never been troubled by it.”

“That’s because you’re in the privileged class of the rich.”

“Is that so? Did I have any special privilege?”

I had meant it in sarcasm, but this woman scrunched her brow, and seriously began thinking over it. It seems my sarcasm did not get through.

I let out a sigh.

“You’re definitely a privileged class. A position I’d like to get to someday.”

“Dan. Do you want me to teach you one way to get there?”

“What is it?”

“You need only undo your curse. Don’t think anyone has any value. Do that and voila, everyone becomes equal. Me and you are the same, two people with a value of nil.”

“That’s...”

It made my mind turn for a bit, but I wrote it off as idiotic.

“I think I’ve figured out why curses are necessary. Without them, humans turn into animals.”

“Right, as long as humans continue forming their society, the curses will never go away. Even without special talent or unique ability, with the curse of contract, a superior can order his subordinates, and with only the ‘respect your elders’ curse, the students submit to the teacher. By the curse that one must be thankful to their parents, the child lives their whole life in gratitude them.”

“By the way you put it, it’s as if the child is slave to his parents.”

“Ah come to think of it, you don’t have any parents, do you Dan?”

“You say it so tactlessly.”

Of course, I also brought up things hard to speak about with this boss, so it was mutual, I guess.

“The defendant did had parents it seems. Those parents were the descendants of the hero who defeated the demon lord, Roland Rheinland, apparently.”

“Apparently. Meaning there’s no evidence?”

Rather, what’s this about the hero? Or so I wanted to question, but I decided to put that off to later.

Among those who committed crimes, you would occasionally get those who claimed to be the envoy of god, or that they were possessed by the devil.

It’s true the existence of angels and demons have been confirmed. But no human has ever seen god, and most spoken of him is built on books of the past.

Perhaps he exists, perhaps he doesn’t. But what I do know for certain is that when criminals put those words to mouth, it’s mainly to gain acquittal for reasons of insanity.

Of course, we couldn’t seek responsibility from someone without the capacity for it. There are people who are threatened to commit crimes regardless of their own will as well. Those sorts of people should be defended, and it’s a cruel thing to demand responsibility from them.

But on the other side, there were attorneys who’d used that as a tactic to win over an innocent verdict.

It isn’t strange for a pro to use some effective tactic to get their verdict, and I knew that from before I even became a lawyer.

But when I actually see such dealings at the scene, it gives me a bad taste in my mouth.

Perhaps a buildup of those ugly dealings had come to make me hate criminal cases before I even realized it.

“The hero of the ten-year war, Roland Rheinland is the greatest enigma of the century. Don’t you know him?”

“I’m not good with those sorts of things... I do know he defeated the demon lord. But not much of what came after that.

“Right. Truth be told, that’s the greatest mystery. After defeating the demon lord, hero Roland disappeared altogether.”

Boss Natasha raised her black-framed glasses, and continued.

“No one ever saw him again.”

“By no one, you mean no one?”

“Yes, no one. It seems he had a son, but his entire family disappeared together. After that, people proclaiming themselves the descendants of the hero began popping up all over the world.”

“All over, is it? If that’s true, that hero sure got busy.”

“Of course, a majority were lies. Complete nonsense. Swindlers claiming the title for wealth, perhaps.”

“Then the defendant as well?”

I pointed to the photo and spoke.

“Is Claudia Rheinland one of them?”

“That is also under investigation. But look, this country didn’t even take part in the ten year war, right? So we’ve absolutely no documents about the hero.”

“How about genetics?”

“The forensics team is on it. But I’m sure it’ll be impossible. The hero didn’t leave a DNA sample anywhere. However, there was a photo of him back his hometown of Austen. And in it, the holy sword Blutgang was shown.”

“The same shape?”

“Can’t say much to that. It’s true they looked alike, but the photo was old, and it was blurry, so we can’t be certain. And that photo is famous in those lands, they’re making mountains of imitations. If you want a similar sword, you can get your hands on one easily.”

There Boss Natasha leaned forward and spoke.

“But we have proof our sword is the real one.”

“There was a detailed record of the sword in the picture. Where and when it received its blessing, its legend was handed down. And they even detailed its abilities.”

“Abilities? Apart from its curse?”

“Of course, something else. And that was why Claudia Rheinland was arrested as a suspect for murder. The most prominent evidence.”

I waited intently for the next words. Natasha opened her mouth.

“Blutgang is a sham of a sword. That sword is unable to cut any living things, you see. Apart from the demon lord himself.”

Visitations (12)

“... Isn’t that a contradiction?”

I tried retorting for what it was worth.

“The demon lord was defeated by the hero in the ten-year war. And the holy sword Blutgang is a special sword that can only kill the demon lord. Isn’t this a so-called truth that can shake the world?”

“Well let’s see. We have witness reports, and clear-cut evidence. That truth doesn’t look like it’s going to shake.”

“On the other hand, the police arrested a girl claiming to be the hero’s descendent for a murder in November. The proof was that she had the holy sword. First of all, that’s strange. If it can only kill the demon lord, that’s impossible. He already died. More than fifty years ago.”

“That’s your logic, Dan. But it seems the police, or rather the prosecution sees things differently. By the forensic examination, it has been fully proven that Blutgang cannot kill any non-human lifeforms either.”

“How did they test that?”

“Of course, by attempting to cut through an experimental mouse. The animal rights activists are giving them hell.”

Boss Natasha seemed especially gloomy as she took a breath.

“I’m no good with those sorts of people.

“So what was the result?”

“Yeah. It splendidly failed to cut. It was a matter of whether the sword’s edge could even touch it or not, and it passed straight through the mouse. It was quite a sight on the eyes.”

“What sort of structure would it need for that?”

“Who knows? Magic’s a deep subject. And we’re in uncharted territory.”

Anyways, we know that the holy sword can’t cut living things. That leads to the question.

“If it can’t kill lifeforms, then has it been tested on humans?”

“Oh, how sharp. As expected of my star pupil!”

Natasha tried to pat my head, so I brushed her hand off.

“H-how cruel.”

“Quiet down. So did they do any human experimentation?”

“They didn’t. Do you think the legal branch of our country’s government would ever approve of human experimentation?”

“You have a point.”

But doesn’t that just lessen the grounds for her arrest? It’s true a sword that can’t kill is a rare thing, and if it can’t kill, I doubt it would kill humans. Even if it could kill a supposed demon lord, that’s a talk of legend. In society, if there wasn’t any evidence, it had no credibility.

As I thought, Boss Natasha spoke up.

“Do you know about magic parsing?”

“First I’m hearing of it.”

“It’s one of the new investigative measures the magic theory lab are using these days. It’s pretty much the magic version of DNA, you could say.”

“Hmm, I didn’t know that.”

At the very least, back when I was working in this office, that vocabulary didn’t exist yet.

In this world, there were races who could use magic, and those that could not. To speak to the world’s population, less than ten percent could call upon its power.

Humans who could use magic were called magicians, or witches, and it seems in the distant past, there were loads of them all over the world.

To support that theory, traces of magic use uncovered from ruins all over, alongside weapons and tools that used mana had been discovered.

And among the magicians, very rarely, a person capable of enchanting weapons with magic would come out. The weapons produced by those people were exceptionally valuable, and could be sold for a high sum.

Of course, it was often the case they were used to hurt people.

If it were a gun or sword, they could use traces at the scene to narrow down who did it to an extent. But the trouble in magic was in how they didn't leave any traces at all.

With a gun, the scent of gunpowder would remain on the scene, and if even the bullet remained, the ballistics could be used to trace what sort of weapon had fired it.

If a sword were used, there were times the sword's remnants would remain in the victim's flesh. The human body is surprisingly hard, so it's quite often some fragments are left behind, so in stabbing incidents, these murder weapon traces can be hints to solve the incident.

But you can't hope for those traces with magic weapons. Compared to normal weapons, it was harder to establish proof linking back. There were many hands dyed in sin who would make use of that fact.

"What do you mean when you say it's like DNA analysis?"

"If DNA analysis is a means to discriminate between the genetic patterns of people, than magic parsing is a means to observe the pattern of the magic that was used. It seems there are idiosyncrasies to the magic used by magicians and magic tools."

"Like blood type?"

"Even more precise than that. They first started using magic parsing in cases around three years ago. Identifying the culprit of those serial killings in Balas was the first use of it in investigations."

"That incident? If I recall, the culprit killed himself, didn't he?"

Three years ago. In the outskirts of Balas with a population under three thousand, a young woman was killed. It was an incident the news and papers especially sensationalized.

By my memory, after the report was sent in, I get the feeling the culprit was arrested relatively quickly.

"The one who committed suicide wasn't the culprit. A man friendly with the

first victim around suspicions. He had no alibi, and his fingerprints were found at the scene where the body was discovered, so the police arrested him, but he was released at once. Because a second victim had come out.”

“Now that I didn’t know.”

“Because the police put out a gag order along the way. Though a few magazines kept writing as if the first suspect was the true culprit to the end.”

It was three years ago, so it happened before I was working here. Despite the gag order in place, that this boss sounded so knowledgeable about it made me suspicious she was somehow involved in that case.

“I don’t really like speculation. In media scrums, those fields’ specialists can think over it, but I can’t bring myself to like it.”

She was definitely involved. But it seems she didn’t really want to talk about it, so I decided not to touch that subject.

“After he was set free, the man made out as the first suspect committed suicide... the investigations, you see. They were back at the starting point. There were no weapons at the scene, and they couldn’t find any fingerprints besides the suspect’s and the victim’s. It was a rough investigation. There, they decided to implement what was gaining attention in the scientific society at the time, and that was magic parsing.”

Boss Natasha went on. “Magic leaves a trace,” she said.

“The members of MT compress a special sort of liquid, and spray it around the scene. With that, they were able to pick up traces of magic. After that, all they had to do was harvest it up, and analyze it for its pattern. Based on the parsing, they were able to tell whether it was used by a human, or the result of some tool, and by comparing their archetypes, they were able to determine what it wasn’t.”

“That sounds amazing.”

“As a result of reinvestigation with reference to the magic parsing data, just a single suspect had surfaced. When they investigated his house, they found a magic weapon that gave off the same signature. The culprit was arrested.”

Boss Natasha took a deep breath, and said “That took a while, would you like some tea?”

“I’d love some,” I replied.

Visitations (13)

There were two white teacups lined on the table. With supple gestures, Boss Natasha tilted the pot, letting a brown liquid unevenly seep into one of the cup.

I watched it all in suspense. In contrast to her years, Boss Natasha had quite the klutzy nature. I surmise those teacups were just purchased recently.

Back when I worked at this office, this person had a habit of destroying anything ceramic. She dropped them so frequently that I bought her some wooden tableware that wouldn't shatter on impact, but perhaps her natural absentmindedness had already misplaced them.

"Boss."

"Yes?"

I sent a cold glare at her, as she carefully tried to put the cups right to the very brink with a serious look on her face.

"Please don't play around."

"I'm always serious."

Especially when it's not called for.

The moment the liquid was at a point where it would either overflow or not, I snatched the teapot from her, and poured the other cup.

"Ah, it could still take some more."

"What could? I'm not taking any of that."

I ignored her low groan as I put the cup to my mouth. I took a sip. And I muttered. 'Godawful.'

"What is this supposed to be?"

"Hmm? Who knows? It's an unidentified something my father sent over three months ago. The truth is, no one knows what is it."

"Why did you serve something so suspicious!?"

"I mean, the last time I ate something father sent over, I got terrible food poisoning. I don't want to go through that again. So before I drank it, I wanted

someone to taste test it for poison...”

“The hell are you saying!? And wait, poison!? This is poisonous!?”

“As I was telling you, I don’t know. You’re taste testing so we can figure that out, right?”

“I see, it’s just as you say! Did you think that’s how I was going to respond!?”

“Ekh, the old Dan would’ve laughed it off and forgiven me. Hasn’t your personality grown a bit harsher since you went independent?”

“On the other hand, your absentmindedness has gained more traction.”

After we spent a bit of time exchanging sarcasm, my stomach suddenly began to hurt. I had to lock myself in the bathroom for an hour.

Skipping forward some, there were two glasses of tap water on the table between us.

Let’s get back to the main topic. I’ll let the food-poisoning incident wash away alongside my bowels. I really am still angry, but today I had come to speak of work.

I decided to sum up the previous points of conversation.

“So pretty much, there are two pieces of evidence that led the police to arrest Claudia Rheinland. There was no one besides her who could use the murder weapon. And that sword can’t cut any lifeform but the demon lord. Is that how it is?”

“Yes. I’m glad you’re so quick on the uptake.”

“Shut it. I’m quite irritated right now. Next time you say something strange, I really will hit you.”

I thought I had said it threateningly, but Boss Natasha said something like, ‘Eh? Why! When I’m so cute? Hmph.’ And other annoying things, so it seems that it didn’t have an effect.

I sighed. And I remonstrated myself... calm down. This person is just enjoying watching other peoples’ reactions.

“But isn’t that strange?”

“You think? I’m sure I’m cute no matter what I do, but...”

“I’m not talking about you. If we’re to trust everything we know about Claudia Rheinland, then the only one in the world she’s capable of murdering is the

demon lord. The demon lord already perished, didn't he?"

"Doesn't that depend on how you define demon lord?"

Natasha drank down her cup of water. I came to a strange realization that even a rich girl drank tap water.

"It's not like the demon lord was something that just appeared out of nowhere someday. He had family and relatives. The demon lord's bloodline still remains, meaning he has descendants."

"Meaning Blutgang is a sword that can murder the demon lord, and those close to him?"

"The possibility is high. In all actuality, demon lord is just a title. If hypothetically, a new demon lord was crowned somewhere in the world, then the question becomes whether the holy sword could kill them or not."

I thought. What's a demon lord in the first place??

"If we were to use the dictionary definition, then the demon lord would be the one who governs those of demonic nature."

Natasha continued. "There are also those born with a strange sort of talent or wit, those that used violence and authority to oppress others have been classified as demon lords as well. The one defeated fifty years ago used his inhuman charisma to lead an army of evil, invading countries all over the world. Apparently."

Well well, that's quite a villain, or so I thought in a nook of my heart.

"Okay, I understand that the definition of demon lord is quite an abstract thing. So the police are thinking that it isn't just the demon lord of the ten-year war fifty years ago, the sword can murder demon lords in the overly broad sense of the term?"

"So it seems."

"But if that's the case, how can you distinguish human and demon lord? From my point of view, you're plenty a demon lord yourself, but from another person's eyes, you're just a peculiar woman."

"Right. That's precisely the problem. When I wield this beautiful face and captivating body, why is it that everyone treats me as an oddball? It's unthinkable."

I was surprised... so she was aware she was an oddball.

“What part of that should I latch onto? That’s not the point at hand. I’m saying, how does the holy sword distinguish that the person it’s about to cut down is a demon lord?”

“About that, the suspect said something. It seems the sword can make out their blood.”

“Blood, eh?”

Boss Natasha explained. “Right. Blutgang can’t cut anything. Even if you touch the edge, it will pass through as if there was nothing there at all. However, it’s not as if that blade merely passes through the body without meaning.”

“Blutgang remembers the taste of the demon lord’s blood. It cuts people with that same taste in their veins. That’s why the police believe it should be able to cut his family and relatives.”

“Then the victim in this incident...”

I hesitated to say the rest... “Was the demon lord’s descendent?”

Visitations (14)

“Yes, the probability... they’re a demon lord descendent is high.” Boss continued on. “That man was a mysterious one from the get-go, after all.”

“So we don’t know much about demon lord?”

“There are few documents pertaining to him. Let alone his birthplace, we don’t even know his family structure.”

“Then it wouldn’t be strange if he had a family?”

“Right. There are just so many mysteries, there are even occult-seeped talks that he’s still alive somewhere.”

“Does it really mean something if he’s alive? It’s a tale of fifty years passed, and he should be considerably old, right?”

“No? Not necessarily. There’s little we know about the demon lord, but this alone is certain.”

“What is it?”

On my question, the boss answered in no time at all.

“The demon lord was a magi.”

“By magi, you mean the demi-human race?”

“Anything else come to mind?”

“Not really.”

There were various races in this world. Magi were just one of those races, and while their outward appearance was almost the same as humans, each individual had a trait not found in a normal human.

Like being an exceptionally good thinker, or having superhuman strength, or possessing inhuman beauty, in very rare instances, a powerful magician would be born from them as well.

The symbol of a magi was that one individual talent, but their greatest characteristic was their long lifespan.

Magi could live more than three times the length of a human’s lifespan, and there’s even documentation of some who lived over five hundred years.

... So I guess it wouldn't be strange if he were alive.

The long-lived Magi's outer age looked younger than the average man. They wouldn't look old from a mere hundred years of life, so I've only envy for that point.

With their talent added onto their long life, magi naturally stood in an advantageous position of society. Most first-rate athletes were magi, and many famous wealthy families were magi as well.

Many important seats in government were taken up by them, and the breadth of their activities was quite wide. On the other hand, they had a characteristic ease of becoming the spark for trouble.

Overflowing with talent, they were often overly ambitious, and it's been said they were incapable of cooperation.

For every magi who restored their companies from massive debt in the middle of a recession, there was another that led his first-rate company passed down for generations towards bankruptcy and failure.

They were hit and miss, those magi were.

They had an abundance of success stories, but I'm sure the resentment they bought from humans counted for ten times that.

"That it's easy for magi to be discriminated against is said to be because the demon lord who started the world war fifty years ago was one himself."

Boss Natasha went on. "But the truth is different."

"Magi have always been a race often working secretly in the shadows of society. I won't say each and every one of them is like that, but many aren't so straightforward, and there are even some countries where their entry is banned by law. That alone makes this time's case a delicate one."

For a moment, I couldn't understand what she wanted to say, but then it hit me.

"A magi was killed. They're making it out that the culprit intended to kill the demon lord. The human rights organizations won't keep quiet about this one."
"That's how it is. In the world's eyes, many will sympathize with the victim. The reason the country is using a court-appointed lawyer isn't just because the

defendant has no money. No one wants to be defense in this case.”

“I see, so that’s how it is... wait a second. What did you just say?”

“I’m the cutest in the world.”

“I heard nothing of the sort. This case is court-appointed?”

“That’s right. Didn’t I tell you?”

“You didn’t. First I ever heard it. Aren’t you the one who’ll be paying me for this case?”

“Eh? I’m not. In the first place, Dan, you don’t work here anymore, do you? You won’t be getting a single penny out of this office.”

Boss Natasha made an especially clear-cut (`・ω・´) expression.

Looking at her face, I was irritated at first, but thinking over it, it was obvious.

... Right now, I’m independent. There’s something wrong with relying on another. But even so...

I looked at the photo of the defendant’s face again.

... So no one’s going to protect you, are they.

Visitations (15)

I heard most of the necessary information from Boss Natasha.

There were still a lot of points I didn't understand, but it didn't seem like I could ask any more, so after talking for over an hour on the comedian everyone was loving these days, and the strange business the boss' brother was sticking his hands into-something I didn't care for in the slightest-I made my way out of Happyhappy Law Offices.

It was already dark outside. The sun was sinking below the high-rising mountain range, the streetlights beginning to light up the way.

The brush of the wind made me unintentionally shudder. I thought of returning to my office, but remembering there wouldn't be anyone there, I decided to go to the library.

The library was just barely still open.

The path from Boss Natasha's office to the library was a short one, and after thirty minutes of walking, I was able to spot its temple-like construction.

As I approached its entrance, the automatic doors slid open, a lukewarm wind advancing from within. I immediately entered the hall, lending an ear to the sound of the door shutting behind me.

I dropped by the library with a frequency of a few times per year. I'd been using it since my student days, so our relationship was over ten-years-worth, but regardless of time, the library was always as it was.

If I had to say one point that had changed, there used to be a middle-aged librarian here, but the one organizing the bookshelf-no matter how I looked at her-was a girl in her teens.

"Excuse me."

"Yes, do you need anything?"

After forcefully shoving the books onto the shelf, the librarian turned to me with an innocent look on her face. Wearing a checkered apron over a white

polo shirt, at her chest was the silver badge only official library personnel could wear.

With her hair tied back, there were freckles on her face, and she looked quite young.

“I’m searching for books on modern history. Do you know where they’re kept?”

“You’re looking for history books? That would be the south side of the second floor. Do you want me to guide you?”

“No, I’m fine. I know the place.”

There was a stack of books under her arm, and she looked busy, so I gave a polite refusal.

After a light nod, I headed for the second floor.

Visitations (16)

The library wasn't very popular.

But I didn't know who could be watching, so without parting from my briefcase, I headed for the history book corner.

Once upon a time, back when I commuted to law school, I'd abandon my bag and reference books on the table, and go off to search for something else, but at this point, if anything happened to my documents, my attorney standing was at risk.

A few volumes to start. I chose out some books on the world war, and left them on the table. Perhaps because the heating was working, I felt a slight drowsiness, but pushing my fingers against my eyebrows, I forcefully woke myself.

... Anyways, let's look into it.

Even if it was fifty years ago, that war was the most recent major war, and the documents pertaining to the demon lord vs. alliance were extensive, so this time, I mainly picked out books offering the general just, and books about the relevant laws.

But even so, the contents were bulky, and with every flip of the page, my head bobbed as I kept myself from sinking to sleep; however, I did somehow manage to grasp roughly what was written.

The ten-year war, to sum it all up, was a war of invasion. Publically, it was expressed as the battle for liberation of demi-humans who were abused almost like slaves at the time, but the truth was almost the exact opposite.

In the first place, that was a poor choice of words. If you wanted to call them enslaved, it's true it sounded as if there were restriction placed on their human rights, but if you looked at history in the longer term, they had already been granted their rights at that point fifty years ago.

Where in the world would you find slaves that get unemployment benefits? In

the first place, the moment they had freedom to change occupation, I'm sure you couldn't call them slaves anymore.

If you want to travel eight hundred years up the stream, there was a time demi-humans were unjustly exploited as laborers, but most problems were already resolved to a greater extent fifty years ago.

Of course, it seems there was some discord in the relations of employer and employee, but that's still there now.

I mean, even I was dragged through hell by my former boss.

But that era was seen as a single turning point in the world's flow, it seems. Because from that period, a rapid development of magic and science had begun.

Up to that point, making scientific precision equipment was the most they could do, but the development of motion engines gradually proceeded, and the science culture rapidly started evolving.

It was the time a change came to science and magic.

Things impossible to that point were happening. Perhaps the people of the time had felt that characteristic change of era first-hand.

People adaptable to change would give the appropriate response regardless of the era. Those with foresight would take the first step to turn it into profit.

The demon lord skillfully picked up the flow of the times, and started moving behind the scenes.

There was a group of demi-humans with dissatisfaction towards society from the start. Among them, many only wished for a foe to take out the anger and stress they'd been building up on. Maybe that's all there was to it.

But among the demi-humans there were those hiding powerful strength in themselves, and taking in those sorts brainwashing them, and making them allies of absolute obedience, the demon lord rose.

His small gathering eventually took in many people, before long forming a single organization. A gathering of simply angry demi-humans formed a powerful army, finally declaring war on the world.

Why did they raise a war? That cause is still unclear.

However, one thing alone was clear... the demi-humans were frightfully strong. To the human race lost in its sense of peace, the army with magic was a threat.

The birdmen soaring through the skies, and the giants towering tens of meters... the human armies couldn't stand up to them, and neither sword or gun would work on the magi boasting powerful magic.

But even if that's how it ended up, the first incident was merely some minor strife in the corner of a small country.

As he continued his war, the demon lord began taking in more numbers. He made comrades of demi-humans all over the globe, eventually manipulating enough power to take on the world.

The state of the war where the alliance once thought they were the superiors was off from their expectations, and it all divulged down to a muddy bog of blood upon blood.

By the time such a battle had raged on for ten years, the demon lord was all-too-easily slain by some hero.

With when, where and how he was born left unknown, that demon lord who suddenly became a threat to the world vanished unbeknownst to man.

So in the military tribunal of the post-war international signatory, it all ended with them unable to persecute the ringleader, the demon lord.

Of course, in the case the demon lord was still alive, a retrial would definitely give him death.

But that's only in the case the alliance apprehended him.

This was the constitutional land of Grimbeld, and without taking part in the war, it was the only non-member nation of the alliance. With complete non-intervention from foreign powers as its moto, even if it pressed the crimes that happened in its border, it cared not for any sins overseas, nor would it use them as a reason for unjust arrests.

That's how it was. The demon lord, in this country, he was an existence

without the slightest meaning or worth.

I closed the book.

To hell with demon lord. How idiotic.

It's true this demon lord seemed crafty and inhumane. His starting of the war didn't have any particular just cause, it seems.

Of course, even if there was enough reason, I'm not saying it would've been fine for him to start it. But what about him?

If I searched around, I'm sure I could find more detailed data on his misdeeds. Genocide, torture, human experimentation... but I didn't have the mind to search out those pointless documents.

In this country, the demon lord was still innocent, and already dead.

Kill him? A hero? What era do you think this is?

"Really, why did I take up this case?"

I suddenly felt fatigued. I lay my face on the table, and as my eyes closed, I heard an 'excuse me' from behind.

Turning around, I saw the resident librarian.

"It's almost time to close. Do you want to sign up for a library card?"

She pointed to the forms stacked in the center of the table, but I politely declined.

I had to go to the courthouse tomorrow to request a transfer of the court-appointed defense. After that, a meeting with the defendant.

The more I dug into the incident, the heavier it felt, and I felt that meeting the defendant would prove to be a troublesome thing indeed.

Visitations (17)

The next morning. Good weather. Feeling so-so.

After I finished my breakfast earlier than usual, the first thing I did was go to the bank.

I didn't want that truant to grip my weaknesses anymore, so I decided to pay his salary.

Because of that, I was starting to see the shallow depths of my account.

... It's fine. For the court-appointed defense, as long as I take the request I'll get fifty thousand gold. Then it's thirty thousand per day after that, so no matter how guilty the client is, as long as I build up logic, nitpick at the slightest details, and grumble whenever I can, if I can drag this thing out to a week, that's an extra two hundred and ten thousand.

On top of that, if I win the case, that's a hundred thousand, so...

Before the bank ATM, I thought to myself a moment.

And looked at the bag I held at my side, I thought.

Is her guilt really certain in this incident?

Could it be, really in the realm of slight possibilities here, could it be I actually have a chance at winning this case?

To be quite honest, I'm a hundred percent sure I'll lose. Based on the situation, I may not be able to raise a single objection.

But if a new fact comes to light in the case, what if I could use it as a trigger to turn everything around?

Victory's a hundred thousand gold.

... Three hundred sixty thousand in total. No, if I can drag it from a week to ten day, or even a month, I may be able to get even more.

..... What am I thinking about?

This trial is a sure-guilty zero-innocence rigged race. There's no way I can win.

At soonest, it'll end in a day. So I'm sure the money I can get is just some easy money that won'd add to a hundred thousand.

Right. When it comes to lawyers those that rake it in are a select few. It isn't the time for me to mope around here. Anyways, let's end this job that won't make for any money, and get back to my main job.

I want a job that can earn me more.

Last night, after returning from the library, I read over the documents countless times. Perhaps there was a faint gleam of hope, and somewhere in those pages lay a factor great enough for me to defend the girl, I thought as I inspected every nook and cranny of every page.

As a result, I thought it really was a well-done case.

Evidence, testimony, and a confession.

They've got everything together. On top of that, after the culprit had killed someone, she wasn't repenting in the slightest, it seems.

... This is no good. If there was any single thing going for her, it was that she was still a minor, and it was her first offense.

But this country's juvenile law went to twelve, so just because she was eighteen, it wasn't a basis for a lessened sentence.

"What's there to do."

As long as no new facts came out in today's visitation, the trial's outcome was already in sight.

As I was thinking such a thing, I found myself standing before the courthouse's grand doors.

It was a place I knew well, so even if I didn't pay it any mind, my legs would naturally take me there.

There were two guards at the district court's gates. After offering them a light greeting, I slipped through the gate, and set foot in the entrance hall.

Proceeding straight down that shimmering white-marble hall, there was a reception desk. I had to submit a written application to prove I had taken up this trial's defense.

As it was an incident originally planned for one Natasha Holstein, the reception's database had the name Natasha recorded as the defense attorney. As things were, I wouldn't be able to defend, so I presented Natasha's letter of introduction to the clerk.

The clerk was an elderly man with a high-strung face. "It will take some time, so could you wait over there?" He said as he handed me a numbered ticket.

The clerk took the letter and headed further in. He was likely getting in contact with the support center to confirm whether the duty had really been transferred.

While she had a bit of off places, Boss Natasha's attitude towards work was one anyone could respect.

I'm sure she had already contacted the support, so I only had to wait for that clerk to confirm it.

It would take some time, so I went and found a vending machine to purchase canned coffee, and as I found a leather-coated sofa that the light was hitting in just the right way, I lowered myself onto it.

Perhaps it was entering its expiry date, as the moment I sat, it let out a grating sound as if it would snap any moment. But it felt relatively nice to sit on.

Come to think of it, how long has it been since I took on a criminal case?

I often helped out when I worked at Boss Natasha's office. I would always follow behind her, searching out documents on the cases, investigating, and fighting alongside her in courses.

But I'd never directly taken on a case before.

So perhaps this was my first trial.

"If it's mock trials, I've had my share."

Back when I was in law school, and when I was a legal apprentice. I often took on others in mock trials.

At the time, we made various incidents from real happenings to imaginary ones into mock trials, and a majority of them ended in my victory.

But there was only one opponent I could never win against.

Regardless of how many hundred mock trials I did in my pre-law career, that one who I could never win against once was always walking a step ahead of me.

Whenever she came, there would be the sound of high heels.

Click, click, click... right, right, just like that...?

“Hmmmmmm? Could the one over there possibly be a mister Danial Lockhart?”

For a moment, a chill raced up my spine.

“Aha!? As I thought. It’s Daniel! Been quite a while! What are you doing here? Ah, I’ve got it! You’ve finally been sued for sexual harassment! I always thought your face had an indecent look to it!! You walking sex offender! ”

That person’s condescending tone was one I heard countless times in law school.

The woman’s voice resounded with astounding clarity, and was so ridiculously loud, you could probably hear it no matter where you stood in the courthouse halls.

As if following like thunder after lightning, her clicking high heels continued growing closer to me.

I had stood to my feet before I realized it. And with the same timing, the sound of high heels stopped. She carefully took me in from head to toe, eventually opening her mouth? “Huh? Did you shrink?

That I did not. You’ve just made your heels even higher again, I wanted to retort.

Visitations (18)

The first I met Caitlin Schaefer was in my second year of law school.

At the time, I was a prodigious student who'd constantly have top grades within the university. And Caitlin Schaefer was a genius great enough to constantly take the very top without fail.

If I ever scored high on an exam, she'd be the one to score perfect, and if I spent sleepless nights writing my thesis, she'd do it over breakfast, and get it published in an academic journal.

By the way, never has the day come when my thesis graced any printed publication.

And in the summer of my second year... we gathered in the small classroom on the law school's third floor, and carried out a mock trial.

It was a crushing defeat. I'm not bragging, but that was my first defeat.

Even now, I can remember every detail of the scene.

The trial ending, and the jurors handing in their ballots one by one.

Those jurymen selected from the student, even though some of my best friends were among them, no one put in a vote for me.

Of course, in an impartial trial, dishonesty is unforgivable, and their verdict was an extremely natural thing, but even so, I remember the shock of having no one siding with me at the time.

From that time onwards, she was my natural enemy.

Caitlin Schaefer chose the prosecutor course, so normally, she didn't even have to participate in civil suits, yet for some reason she went out of her way to stand before me in a divorce mock-trial.

One time I asked her why she participated in a mock trial completely irrelevant to her. And as she focused on me with her merlot eyes, she answered this.

"Daniel, your losing face is a laughable sight. I never get tired of looking at it."

I got the feeling I lost out by asking. Henceforth, I became enthusiastic to make this woman lose someday, but I never won once all the way to graduation.

And my matches with her (all losses) continued on through legal apprenticeship.

Of course, when it came to it, unlike when we were students, there were more things we had to do in order to become lawyers, I couldn't carry on our disputes so frequently.

She was the same, and by the time we finished our apprenticeships, we barely ever saw one another.

To be totally honest, at the end of it all, I was filled with a cheery sensation that I was finally free of her.

She was a prosecutor. I was a civil attorney. We were both in different places, and we'd never have to see each other again.

I thought. Yet here at this moment, I encountered her again.

"I-it's been a while, Cate."

I played it calm to the best of my abilities, calling her just as I did in our student days.

Cate stood imposingly, touching a hand to her hip, making an especially gloomy expression. With her long black hair tied back, her form in a suit was strangely fitting.

"It really has been so long, Daniel. And so? How's the prison life?"

"Please don't go making me a prisoner. My record's clean as snow."

"Oh? Is that so?"

"Quite."

"I mean Daniel, I never hear anything but bad rumors about you. Even today, I just heard about you from my friend in the labor standards supervision office."

"What? I didn't do a thing."

"Yes, we have a liar! That's no good, you shouldn't lie so easily."

"I-I didn't lie or anything."

“But Daniel, you didn’t pay your employee’s salary, did you? You sure it’s fine to do such a thing? Should I use the prosecutor office’s privilege to conduct a search of your house and offices? I’m sure some other offenses will come to light.” (`•ω´•)

“I’d rather you not. And if it’s about the salary, I just paid it this morning. So there isn’t a problem.” \ (´Д` ;) /

“I see, but a part of became a prosecutor to slam the hammer of justice down on the bad guys, so it really makes me want to punish the evil before my eyes, you see.”

I felt a sweat on my back.

Of course, I’ve never committed a crime in my life. Not a single illegal act, and I’ve never even gotten the urge to.

So nothing troubling would be found if she searched my house. The problem would be the fact I was searched in itself.

In this world, trust is everything. Being an attorney the clients can trust is the first condition towards success.

It’s true I’m still a novice, and I’ve no personal connections to speak of, but by building up from small jobs, I’m gradually starting to gain results as a lawyer.

If my house got searched at such a time, it would all be for nothing. Where in the world would you find a client bringing a case to a defendant marked by a prosecutor?

If you lose your trust once, it’s difficult to start over in the world.

This woman truly was troublesome. After I gave thought to various things, Cate suddenly burst into laughter.

Her eyes watched me as if she was seeing something interesting as she snickered.

“That’s it. That’s the face I wanted to see.”

When they grow up, most people have a positive change in personality. Even more so if they’re in an upright profession. But it seems that the woman called Caitlin Schaefer does not go by that rule. Her growth had come to a full stop in her student years.

In the same exact tone she gave in our days in law school, she spoke on.

“As always, a wonderful losing face. Seeing that face, I’m as happy as I’ve ever been, Daniel.”

Visitations (19)

“Anyways...” I asked Cate. “Why are you at the courthouse?”

“What else but to spell out a defendant’s guilt? This is a house of law. It’s not like I do all my work at the prosecutors’ office, Daniel.”

... She has a point there. But...

I looked at my watch to confirm it.

“It isn’t even noon yet. Aren’t you a tad early?”

“I’m talented, unlike a certain someone. My motto is to hand down the hammer of justice faster than anyone. I wish you were there to see it, the pale faces of the defence and defendant after their thorough defeat!”

Kyaha! She laughed. And I thought, pity be to that attorney.

I had a vague feeling about it when we were in law school, but the woman called Caitlin Schaefer had a habit of thoroughly beating her foes black and blue, it seems.

No matter the argument, she’d pursue victory, and beat the opponent down until they could stand no more.

Even if you rose an objection, she acted as if she had expected it from the very start, crushing all rebuttal with composure.

She was likely seeing two, maybe three hands ahead.

Cate folded her arms, and stared with her merlot eyes. If she stayed silent, I’ll admit she was cute, but she never closed her mouth to begin with.

“And so? Why are you here, Daniel? If you aren’t being indicted, and you haven’t been arrested, then why? Did you come to lick the soles of my shoes?”

“No such intent. I’m the same as you. I’m a lawyer, so I came to prepare for a trial.”

Perhaps it was an unexpected reply, as her eyes blinked a few times in surprise.

“A trial? A civil case? Was there such a trial scheduled?”

Her face in thought, she began stroking her jaw with her thumb and index finger. That was her pose of trying to remember something.

“I just put in the request. And it isn’t civil. It’s a criminal case. I swapped out with a lawyer from the office I used to work at. This time, I’ll be undertaking the defense of a defendant.”

“Where you worked? If I recall, you were working at Holstein’s place, were you?”

That’s a surprise. Back when we were apprenticing, I never told her where I was going to work. Where’d she find that one out?

“Because she’s a famous one,” said Cate, as if she was reading my mind. “Never knew when I’d meet her in court, so I kept an eye on her. But to think she swapped out with Daniel. Looks like tomorrow’s trial will be over quicker than I thought.”

On her words, an ominous sweat began flowing.

“What’s this about tomorrow’s trial?”

“Oh, didn’t you hear? There’s only one litigation Natasha Holstein is currently scheduled to undertake. And the prosecutor in charge of that case is me. Meaning the one you’ll be taking on in court in tomorrow’s trial is me.”

It’s over. That sort of feeling.

“I’ll let you taste the feelings of a loser again, Daniel.”

She said, as she raised a grand laugh and left the scene.

Visitations (20)

The worst possible case and the worst possible prosecution.

Just thinking about it made for the worst pairing.

To be honest, I didn't know where to start.

Finishing my courthouse paperwork from start to finish, I headed for the detention center the defendant was being kept. The detention center was relatively close to the courthouse, and I was able to reach in around thirty minutes by foot.

Unlike the court's dignified form, a head-on look at the detention center's exterior gave one the feel it was the perfect fortress to lock people away. The building built with its gray concrete exposed didn't give off a hint of kind warmth, holding an air as if you'd be coldly rebounded back if you crashed into it.

After arranging a meeting, I was guided to the visiting room. There was a table and chairs in the room, and two exits. However, a wall of transparent glass was spread right across the center, and that bisected the room in two.

If from the glass onward was the world I lived in, then what existed on the other side?

It was the same space, but the other side shut out by a single pane of glass looked exceptionally distant as if it was an alternate world entirely.

There was no clock in the room, with only a tacit light on the ceiling.

How much time had gone by?

Normally, if you put in an appointment for a visit, you could see them in ten minutes. In the first place, the people in the detention center don't have any plans until the verdict is handed down, so they should be able to meet at once.

But the suspect, no I guess she's already the defendant... Claudia Rheinland showed no signs of coming to the visiting room.

Looking at my watch, the second hand made its war around. One minute, two... ten minutes passed, and finally, thirty were about to go by.

Eventually, I heard a scream on the other side of the glass. Whether it was a human voice, or some beast's roar, I couldn't really tell, but it was a terrible lonesome cry.

“UWOOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!! GIIIVIITBAAACK!!”

Suddenly, the door to the visitor's room was broken down. Just as the phrase implied, it shot off its hinges, and floated through the air momentarily. After the door crashed into the wall on the opposite side, it flopped limply onto the floor. As if to follow behind, a prison guard was shot into the room. His body flew as if it had been rammed by a car, his back hitting the wall much like the door before he collapsed to the ground.

With an exhausted expression, blood flowed from the elderly guard's mouth, as he stared at the floor.

... What is this?

I was overwhelmed by the scene before me. I couldn't tell what was going on.

“Restrain her!!”

Angry roars echoed through the room. Followed by screams, shouts, sobs, I heard the sound of something being struck from the hallway connected to the other side of the room.

Pip pip pip pip... the footsteps echoed. Someone was coming this way.

Eventually, a single girl burst into the room.

Her black hair that reached her hips was disheveled, her long slit eyes looking at me.

My eyes met hers.

The girl whose clothing I couldn't call clean even as flattery stared at me cautiously, her blue eyes taking me in.

Her impression was different from when I saw her in the photo, but there was no doubt about it. She was Claudia Rheinland.

There were black handcuffs binding her hands. But her wrists were bruised red, and for some reason, she was barefoot.

There were wounds and bruises no matter where you looked on her body. For every old wound, there was one brand new, and looking closely, her lips were dripping blood.

“She ran into the visiting room! Chase her!”

As I heard the bellows of guards, Claudia Rheinland’s shoulders twitched in shock as she glared at me once more, making her way towards me.

Something I couldn’t quite think human, she raised a beastly roar as she approached, but her body hit against the glass partitioning the room, preventing her from advancing any further.

This glass was made exceedingly sturdy. It wasn’t something an unarmed human could break, and while Claudia hit her head against it again and again, it only gave off a dull thudding sound.

Finally figuring out it was futile, she touched her forehead to the glass, her blue eyes letting off tears as she whispered.

“Please, give it back...”

Claudia Rheinland was restrained by the guards who flooded in from the passageway, and dragged off further inside.

In the end, that was it for my meeting with her that day.

... The trial was to start tomorrow.